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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **SB 424**

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN IN THE CARE AND CUSTODY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.***

#### **SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to enroll in preschool programs all children who are (1) placed in out-of-home care by DCF under a commitment order, (2) aged three to five years, and (3) not already enrolled in preschool or kindergarten at the time of placement. If DCF determines that preschool enrollment is not in the child's best interest, the enrollment requirement is waived. The bill does not specify whether DCF is responsible for preschool costs.

The bill allows DCF to enroll such children in any of the following preschool programs:

1. a school readiness program that receives State Department of Education (SDE) funding,
2. a school readiness program that is part of a Head Start program, or
3. a preschool program that is (a) administered by a local or regional board of education or (b) accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

The bill also requires DCF to document in the child's plan for care, treatment, and permanent placement (1) such preschool enrollments or (2) the reasons why enrollment is not in the child's best interest.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

#### **BACKGROUND**

##### ***Commitment Order***

Upon finding that any child is uncared for, neglected, or abused, the Superior Court may commit the child to the DCF commissioner until it makes further orders. The court may revoke commitment or terminate parental rights at any time (CGS § 46b-129(j)(2)).

### ***School Readiness Program***

By law, a “school readiness program” is a nonreligious, SDE-funded education program that provides a developmentally appropriate learning experience of at least 450 hours and 180 days for children between ages three and five who are unable to enroll in kindergarten (CGS § 10-16p(a)(1)). SDE funds school readiness programs through priority school district grants and competitive grants (CGS § 10-16p(c)-(d)).

School readiness program providers eligible for SDE funding include local and regional boards of education, regional educational service centers (RESCs), family resource centers, child day care centers, Head Start programs, and other preschool programs that meet the education commissioner’s standards (CGS § 10-16p(b)(1)).

### ***Care, Treatment, and Permanent Placement Plan***

By law, the DCF commissioner must maintain a written plan for care, treatment, and permanent placement for each child under DCF supervision. The plan must include a diagnosis of each child’s problems, a proposed plan of treatment services and temporary placement, and a goal for permanent placement of the child (CGS § 17a-15).

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Education Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea    33        Nay    0        (03/21/2014)